

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for generating a bid for a shipper load, comprising:
 - 5 selecting a plurality of units of capacity;
 - assigning a group identifier to the plurality of units of capacity; and
 - generating a bid for the shipper load using the group identifier.
 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the units of capacity correspond to equipment
 - 10 identifiers defined by a carrier representative.
 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the equipment identifiers correspond to at least one of trucking capacity, aircraft capacity, shipping capacity, and rail capacity.
 4. The method of claim 1 wherein generating a bid comprises generating a
 - 15 plurality of bid entries, each of the bid entries corresponding to one of the units of capacity.
 5. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 1.
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 6. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for bidding on a plurality of shipper loads, comprising generating a plurality of bids corresponding to the plurality of shipper loads, each of the plurality of bids corresponding to a same unit of capacity.
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7. The method of claim 6 wherein the same unit of capacity corresponds to an equipment identifier defined by a carrier representative.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the equipment identifier corresponds to at least one of trucking capacity, aircraft capacity, shipping capacity, and rail capacity.

9. The method of claim 6 further comprising, in response to acceptance by a shipper representative of one of the plurality of bids, making all others of the plurality of bids unavailable.

10. The method of claim 6 wherein the same unit of capacity comprises a group comprising a plurality of units of capacity.

11. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 6.

12. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for bidding on a plurality of shipper loads, comprising:

generating a plurality of bids corresponding to the plurality of shipper loads, each of the plurality of bids corresponding to a same unit of capacity; and

where one of the plurality of bids is accepted, making all others of the plurality of bids unavailable.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the same unit of capacity corresponds to an equipment identifier defined by a carrier representative.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the equipment identifier corresponds to one of trucking capacity, aircraft capacity, shipping capacity, and rail capacity.

5 15. The method of claim 12 wherein the same unit of capacity comprises a group comprising a plurality of units of capacity.

16. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 12.

17. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for generating a bid for a shipper load, comprising:

generating the bid for the shipper load designating a currently unavailable unit of capacity, the bid being identified as a future bid; and

15 when the currently unavailable unit of capacity becomes available, updating the bid to a current bid.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the currently unavailable unit of capacity corresponds to an equipment identifier defined by a carrier representative.

20 19. The method of claim 18 wherein the equipment identifier corresponds to one of trucking capacity, aircraft capacity, shipping capacity, and rail capacity.

25 20. The method of claim 17 wherein the currently unavailable unit of capacity comprises a group comprising a plurality of units of capacity.

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21. The method of claim 17 further comprising:

generating additional bids for other shipper loads designating the currently
unavailable unit of capacity, the additional bids being identified as additional future bids;
and

when the currently unavailable unit of capacity becomes available, updating the
additional bids to a additional current bids.

22. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having

computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 17.

23. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area
network, a method for identifying shipper loads, comprising:

generating a search process according to at least one criterion specified by a carrier
representative;

operating the search process without user intervention to identify at least one shipper
load; and

transmitting a notification corresponding to the at least one shipper load to the carrier
representative.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the at least one criterion comprises at least
one of pickup location, delivery location, pickup date, delivery date, equipment types, and
freight services.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein transmitting the notification comprises at least one of transmitting an e-mail, transmitting a pager signal, and transmitting a message to be displayed using a system interface.

5 26. The method of claim 25 wherein the e-mail includes a hyperlink corresponding to the at least one shipper load.

27. The method of claim 23 wherein operating the search process comprises operating the search process within a window of time specified by the carrier representative.

10 28. The method of claim 23 wherein operation of the search process is activated manually.

15 29. The method of claim 23 wherein operation of the search process is terminated manually.

30. The method of claim 23 further comprising automatically generating a bid for the at least one shipper load on behalf of the carrier representative.

20 31. The method of claim 30 wherein automatically generating the bid comprises generating the bid in accordance with bidding rules specified by the carrier representative.

32. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 23.

33. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for posting at least one unit of capacity for viewing by shipper representatives, the method comprising:

in response to receiving a plurality of capacity parameters input by a carrier representative, generating a listing for the at least one unit of capacity, wherein the listing indicates the at least one unit of capacity is one of currently available and available at some future time; and

posting the listing for the at least one unit of capacity for viewing by the shipper representatives.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the at least one unit of capacity corresponds to an equipment identifier defined by the carrier representative.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the equipment identifier corresponds to one of trucking capacity, aircraft capacity, shipping capacity, and rail capacity.

36. The method of claim 33 wherein the at least one unit of capacity comprises a group comprising a plurality of units of capacity.

37. The method of claim 33 wherein the plurality of capacity parameters includes at least one of a price information, expiration information, and equipment information.

38. The method of claim 33 wherein posting the listing comprises making the listing available to a subset of a plurality of system users as determined from information specified by the carrier representative.

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39. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 33.

5 40. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for presenting information regarding a bid entered against a particular shipper load, the bid corresponding to a particular carrier capacity, the method comprising communicating a number of shipper loads against which the particular carrier capacity is currently bid.

10 41. The method of claim 40 wherein the particular unit of capacity corresponds to an equipment identifier defined by the carrier representative.

15 42. The method of claim 41 wherein the equipment identifier corresponds to one of trucking capacity, aircraft capacity, shipping capacity, and rail capacity.

43. The method of claim 40 wherein the particular unit of capacity comprises a group comprising a plurality of units of capacity.

20 44. The method of claim 40 wherein the information includes a hyperlink, the method further comprising presenting a bid history relating to the particular shipper load in response to selection of the hyperlink.

25 45. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 40.

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46. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for controlling visibility of the carrier capacities and the shipper loads, comprising:

5 limiting visibility of carrier capacities in the system according to shipper identification information input by carrier representatives; and

limiting visibility of shipper loads in the system according to carrier identification information input by shipper representatives.

10 47. The method of claim 46 wherein the carrier capacities correspond to equipment identifiers defined by the carrier representative.

48. The method of claim 47 wherein the equipment identifiers correspond to at least one of trucking capacity, aircraft capacity, shipping capacity, and rail capacity.

15 49. The method of claim 46 wherein selected ones of the carrier capacities comprise groups comprising pluralities of units of capacity.

20 50. The method of claim 46 wherein the shipper identification information comprises a Dun & Bradstreet company identifier.

51. The method of claim 46 wherein the carrier identification information comprises a Standard Carrier Alpha Code (SCAC).

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52. The method of claim 46 further comprising generating a list of the shipper identification information for each carrier capacity according to the input from the carrier representatives.

5 53. The method of claim 52 wherein each list includes a designation associated with each item of the shipper identification information, the designation indicating whether an associated shipper may view the associated carrier capacity.

10 54. The method of claim 46 further comprising generating a list of the carrier identification information for each shipper load according to the input from the shipper representatives.

15 55. The method of claim 54 wherein each list includes a designation associated with each item of the carrier identification information, the designation indicating whether an associated carrier may view the associated shipper load.

20 56. The method of claim 46 further comprising limiting visibility of carrier capacities and shipper loads in the system according to system user information input which identifies a corresponding system user as one of an asset based and a non-asset based system user.

57. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 46.

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58. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for notifying a system user of system events, comprising:

presenting a list of the plurality of system events to the system user;

presenting a plurality of notification options to the system user;

5 receiving at least one selection by the system user from the list of the system events, the at least one selection corresponding to a subset of the plurality of system events;

receiving at least one other selection by the system user of at least one notification option from the plurality of notification options; and

10 notifying the system user using the at least one notification option upon occurrence of any of the subset of the plurality of system events.

59. The method of claim 58 wherein the system user comprises a carrier representative.

15 60. The method of claim 59 wherein the list of system events includes at least one of load entered, load confirmed, load rejected, delivery confirmation, load removed, load updated, load pre-expire, load expired, rate updated, bid entered, bid manually accepted, bid automatically accepted, bid meets auto notify, agent matched loads, low bid underbid, bid removed, bid updated, bid pre-expire, bid expired, unit updated, and transaction closed.

20 61. The method of claim 58 wherein the system user comprises a shipper representative.

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62. The method of claim 58 wherein the plurality of notification options includes at least one of transmitting an e-mail, transmitting a pager signal, and transmitting a message to be displayed using a system interface.

5 63. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 58.

64. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for effecting payment from a shipper to a carrier, comprising:

10 presenting delivery information from the carrier to the shipper regarding delivery of a shipper load; and

closing the shipper load in response to the delivery information, thereby automatically effecting payment of the carrier by the shipper.

15 65. The method of claim 64 further comprising providing a window of opportunity to the shipper in which the shipper may dispute the delivery information before payment of the carrier is effected.

20 66. The method of claim 64 wherein automatically effecting payment comprises effecting an electronic funds transfer from the shipper to the carrier using account information previously input into the system by representatives of the shipper and the carrier.

25 67. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 65.

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68. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for maintaining a service rating for each shipper and each carrier in the system, comprising:

5 tracking at least one parameter for each of the shippers and carriers, the at least one parameter relating to performance of the corresponding one of the shippers and carriers in system transactions;

updating the service rating for each of the shippers and carriers based on the at least one parameter; and

10 communicating the service rating for each of the shippers and carriers to selected users of the system.

69. The method of claim 68 wherein the at least one parameter for carriers includes at least one of timeliness of pickup, timeliness of delivery, damage to cargo, rejection of loads, shipper complaints relative to an aggregate number of loads handled by the carrier, misrepresentation of equipment, and misrepresentation of services.

70. The method of claim 68 wherein the at least one parameter for shippers includes at least one of carrier complaints, renegeing on accepted bids, payment issues, misrepresentation, and hidden charges.

71. The method of claim 68 wherein the service rating for each carrier is updated upon closing of a load corresponding to the carrier.

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72. The method of claim 68 wherein the service rating for each shipper is updated upon closing of a load corresponding to the shipper.

73. The method of claim 68 wherein communicating the service rating for each carrier comprises including the service rating in bids presented on the system which correspond to the carrier.

74. The method of claim 68 wherein communicating the service rating for each shipper comprises presenting the service rating in loads presented on the system which correspond to the shipper.

75. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 68.

76. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for responding to bids for a shipper load corresponding to a shipper, comprising:

posting the shipper load on the system, the shipper load having an automatic acceptance price associated therewith specified by a shipper representative, the automatic acceptance price being a monetary value at and below which automatic acceptance is authorized;

receiving a bid for the shipper load specifying a bid price; and

where the bid price is less than or equal to the automatic acceptance price, automatically accepting the bid on behalf of the shipper.

77. The method of claim 76 wherein posting the shipper load comprises making the shipper load available to a subset of a plurality of system users as determined from information specified by the shipper representative.

5 78. The method of claim 76 further comprising notifying the shipper representative regarding acceptance of the bid.

79. The method of claim 78 wherein notifying the shipper representative comprises at least one of transmitting an e-mail to the shipper representative, transmitting a pager signal to the shipper representative, and transmitting a message to be displayed using a system interface to the shipper representative.

80. The method of claim 76 wherein the shipper load also has an automatic notify price associated therewith, the automatic notify price being a monetary value at and below which automatic notification of the shipper representative is authorized, the method further comprising automatically notifying the shipper representative regarding the bid where the bid price is less than or equal to the automatic notify price.

81. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 76.

82. In a system for matching carrier capacities with shipper loads via a wide area network, a method for responding to bids for a shipper load corresponding to a shipper, comprising:

posting the shipper load on the system, the shipper load having an automatic notify price associated therewith specified by a shipper representative, the automatic notify price being a monetary value at and below which automatic notification of the shipper representative is authorized;

5 receiving a bid for the shipper load specifying a bid price; and

where the bid price is less than or equal to the automatic notify price, automatically notifying the shipper representative regarding the bid.

83. The method of claim 82 wherein posting the shipper load comprises making the shipper load available to a subset of a plurality of system users as determined from information specified by the shipper representative.

84. The method of claim 82 wherein notifying the shipper representative comprises at least one of transmitting an e-mail to the shipper representative, transmitting a pager signal to the shipper representative, and transmitting a message to be displayed using a system interface to the shipper representative.

85. The method of claim 82 wherein the shipper load also has an automatic acceptance price associated therewith, the automatic acceptance price being a monetary value at and below which automatic acceptance is authorized, the method further comprising automatically accepting the bid on behalf of the shipper where the bid price is less than or equal to the automatic acceptance price.

86. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having computer program instructions embedded therein for performing the method of claim 82.